The Builder.

No. CXLVI.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 1845.

PARLIAMENTARY standing orders require that plans of railways, with books of reference, must be deposited with the various clerks of the peace, on or before Saturday next. Without this step, a project can have no *status* this session; moreover, to maintain this *status*, and get an opportunity to *try* to prove the preamble of the Bill, the plan and Book of Reference *must be correct, and in accordance with certain regulations.* Ponder this, ye pseudo-surveyors at seven guineas per day! reflect on it, ye unwise hirers of such,—ye men of much haste and little speed. The flock of rising barristers, recent products of the railway system,—hatched and bred in the ovens, 'yclept committee-rooms, already look forward to the easy triumph which your expected errors, omissions, and impracticabilities, will yield them; knowing, well as they do, that the slightest grounds for declaring "standing orders not complied with," will be eagerly seized by the committee, in their anxiety to lessen the number of schemes before the House.

Scores of the parties employed in surveying, levelling, and mapping, are utterly incompetent, and yet are paid immense salaries for their *services*. We know youngsters, hardly able to tell the right end of a theodolite from the wrong, who are receiving two, three, and four guineas a day and their expenses. The supposed necessity for going to Parliament immediately, and the insufficient number of surveyors, as compared with the number of projects, have induced an expenditure so lavish and reckless, as to prove that the parties making it, are wholly unfit to direct the schemes of which they are the heads, and dispense money belonging to others. A non-professional acquaintance of ours, who has a tolerable knowledge of surveying and levelling (in theory), was called on by a solicitor who had heard of his attainments in these respects, to know on what terms he would undertake to map a certain portion of a line. "I am not disposed to do it at all," said our friend. "We will give you three guineas a day," urged the solicitor. "That would not induce me," was the reply. "Well, four then,—nay, five, if four won't do; a map we must have within four weeks from this time." Our friend still shook his head; but ultimately said, simply with the view of getting rid of the applicant, that he would make the attempt, if they would pay him twelve guineas a day for two months certain. The proposal was immediately accepted; and, before he left town, he received intimation that they should not object to pay for the seventh day of the week; and he is now positively at work on these terms.

None of our readers will consider us opposed in any degree to railways: every line properly carried out will improve trade, call labour into employment, and advance both the intellectual and commercial power of the nation. To the extent of our ability we have encouraged and will encourage, the investment of capital in their construction, satisfied further, that it will tend not only to the good of the community, but the pecuniary advantage of the individuals so employing it. We do, however, object to, and reprobate severely, the lavish and useless expenditure of the subscribers' money, which prevents the possibility of any return being made for a long period of time, and has the effect of checking real improvements, by driving away prudent capitalists (the most important class), who are seeking investments, and who, if they took shares, would do so to hold.

The money spent on the old lines was enormous, very much more than was necessary. But the proposed lines, if from the foot we may judge the statue, are to surpass them far in imprudence and reckless extravagance. Engineers are to be paid any sum, no matter how preposterous the amount may be, that will induce them to undertake the matter; landowners any sum that will secure their consent; and when we add to this the enormous expense to which, after all, in nine cases out of ten, they will be put, most unwisely, by the opposition of existing companies and others, to say nothing of the cost of construction, directors' fees, &c., the possibility of the line paying, even should the application be successful, is seen to be postponed for many years.

Moreover, with all this cost, the actual work (supposing preliminary errors to be got over), will not be well done. When an engineer rides once over the ground, and then settles the line in his library, either with or without a few maps, and some suggestions from local men, he may by *possibility*, hit on the best and most economical course; the chances, however, are wholly against it. Thousands of pounds will be spent, through the engineer being ignorant of the nature of the land over or through which the road is to pass, and thousands more, because he had not time to ascend a neighbouring eminence, which would have shewn him how, by a trifling *detour*, costly works might have been avoided.

"We are perfectly aware of all this," provisional committees may say,—"but what is to be done? The time is coming on, and to Parliament we must go at once." To Parliament you must go, gentlemen, doubtless; but why at once? Take advice; and unless your line has been thoroughly digested and canvassed; carefully surveyed and planned; and you are perfectly satisfied that you can meet all the requirements of the Legislature, delay your application till the following session. True, the temporary value of your scrip will fall, but your permanent interests, and those of the subscribers generally, always supposing that your project be a sound one, will unquestionably be advanced. Your scheme might lose its position as an instrument of gambling, but would gain the consideration of those who are seeking to invest their money in reasonable projects, directed by honourable and enlightened men.

MUSEUM OF NATIONAL ANTIQUITIES.

THE report, to which we referred some time ago, that Lord Prudhoe, through the Archæological Institute, had offered his collection of national antiquities to the British Museum, on condition that they would set apart a proper place for the reception of other collections bearing on the same subject, is confirmed; and, better still, the trustees have accepted the terms, and appear, at last, disposed to take up this most important matter with earnestness. In a leading article on the subject in April last,* wherein we argued the advantages that would follow such a collection, we alluded to an application made to the trustees of the Museum two years before, praying them to provide accommodation in their new building for British architectural antiquities. The trustees returned for answer that they were *not prepared to recommend her Majesty's Government to do so.*

Since then, it appears, their eyes have been opened to its importance by the Archæological Institute, to whom all who are interested in the subject must therefore feel grateful. At the last meeting of the Institute of Architects (a report of which will be found on the next page), the following communication addressed by Mr. Edward Hawkins to Mr. Poynter, the honorary secretary, was read:—

"British Museum, Nov. 17, 1845.

MY DEAR SIR,—As the formation of an extensive collection of national antiquities is contemplated at the British Museum, and as a room for their reception will shortly be opened in that establishment, I am most anxious as the keeper of the department of antiquities, to take every step for the furtherance of this object. The committee of the Archæological Institute, kindly co-operating with the Museum in the desire to form such a collection, have already taken active measures towards the awakening public interest in the matter. Much will, I am sure, be accomplished by their exertions, but they feel as I do, the necessity of seeking the aid of those who, by the experience and opportunities of their profession, are best able to carry out some general scheme for the record and preservation of antiquities found in this country. A great part of such objects are discovered in works conducted under the control and inspection of architects, and it is to the professional knowledge of the architect that we are generally indebted for an authentic account of such discoveries, and by his influence, that antiquities thus found can be best protected. I therefore venture to address myself on this subject through you, their secretary, to the Fellows of the Royal Institute of British Architects, hoping that by their authority and example, an active interest in the preservation of antiquities may be created in the whole body of their profession, and may thus be gradually communicated to their clerks, and to the foremen and others more immediately set over workmen employed in labours of excavation and demolition.

The claims of archæology once publicly recognized, antiquities when discovered would no longer be ignorantly destroyed or dispersed, but would be scrupulously collected together into one place; the circumstances of their discovery would be registered with far greater accuracy, and the result in a few years would be a most interesting collection of monuments of national art, and the development of the history of successive races, as far as it can be gathered from the evidences of archæology, and as it is exhibited in the museums of other countries.

I need hardly here remind you, that if to the archæologist hardly any comparison seems too extensive or too minute, if he seek to bring together every fragment of the works of former races, and studies not only the nobler specimens of their art, but every variety of type in the fashion of their costume, and the implements of their daily life, he does so with the deep conviction, that in all these relics there is meaning and value, not merely because they may singly corroborate or by chance supply history, but because when put together and viewed in connection, they exhibit with peculiar reality, the character of an age or race as it has unconsciously revealed itself in its art and handicraft.

I trust that the truly national character of the object set forth in this letter, may serve as my apology for having ventured to make this appeal to the Fellows of the Institute of Architects; if in these remarks is found no definite request or proposition as to the mode of recording or guarding discoveries of antiquities, it is because I would rather invite the suggestions of others, best qualified by professional experience, to decide what measures are practicable for such a purpose.

I remain, my dear Sir, yours truly,

EDWARD HAWKINS."

We cordially echo Mr. Hawkins' wish, that by the authority and example of the Institute, an active interest in the preservation of antiquities may be excited in the whole body of the profession, and may be communicated to workmen and others, employed in excavations. We shall return to the subject forthwith.

* See page 181, *ante*.

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